

December 6, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

FROM: PHYLLIS M. STABBE
CHAIR, FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

SUBJECT: Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures for Adverse Weather Conditions and Other Emergency Situations

Every year, the Chicago Federal Executive Board issues *Emergency Dismissal or Closure Procedures* for agencies and employees in the Chicago area. These procedures, which are designed to apply not just in adverse weather conditions, but in all kinds of emergency situations, were developed over a period of several years. As in the past, the attached procedures are based on the principle that the business of the Federal Government is vital to serving the public.

In light of the events of September 11, the FEB's Executive Committee recently reviewed our procedures and has made a few changes. These changes and additions are **both in bold and in parentheses ()**. **The most significant change is that liberal leave will be the default policy in most emergency situations.** Please see the Emergency Plan for details.

Please review the attached plan and take whatever actions you deem necessary to ensure that the plan has been incorporated into your office's internal system. We suggest you pay particular attention to the Procedures section of this plan.

The Emergency Plan features three methods of communication to disseminate the information as quickly and as widely as possible. **These are a direct call notification through the Emergency Automated Notification System, a 24-hour hotline, and a posting on the FEB Web site.**

1) The Emergency Automated Notification System is administered for the FEB by the Federal Aviation Administration. This computer system has the capability to simultaneously broadcast telephone messages during both duty and non-duty hours to all Federal executives who have provided contact information. **If you have not already done so, or if your contact information should change, please alert the FEB office immediately by emailing the correct information to the FEB Executive Director, Jan Stinson, at jan.stinson@gsa.gov.** NOTE: Please make sure to maintain a copy of the information you provide to the FEB for your own records.

2) A confidential 24-hour "hotline." Our confidential FEB phone number for emergency information is 312-353-9463 (WIND). It is operational 24 hours a day, making it available for both on-duty and after-hours emergencies. Agency, office, and installation heads are responsible for calling the hotline for both on-duty and after-hours emergencies. We will not call you. Although the "WIND" number should be easy to remember, we suggest that you carry the number with you at all times.

Your cooperation is essential in restricting the disclosure of the "hotline" phone number within your organization. With 170 member agencies and over 60,000 Federal employees, the "hotline" number will be ineffective if everyone accesses it. We would suggest you strictly minimize who has access to this number to yourself, as agency head, and one additional key staff member.

3) Emergency information will be posted on the FEB Web site at www.chicago.feb.gov.

Although any one of these methods alone is not guaranteed to reach all member agencies, we believe that there is sufficient overlap and redundancy in the system to be confident that all agencies will be able to obtain the information they need.

Comments and recommendations for changes to the plan should be communicated to the FEB office at 312-353-6790, or to me at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, at 312-353-0387.

Attachment

CHICAGO FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

EMERGENCY ALERT AND DISMISSAL PLAN FOR FY 2002

DECEMBER 2001

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CHICAGO FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD
EMERGENCY ALERT AND DISMISSAL PLAN
FOR FY 2002

SECTION I - POLICY

The following establishes a uniform policy for advising agency heads of emergency information and/or dismissal of Federal employees in the immediate Chicago area during emergency situations.

Emergency situations covered by the plan are those of sufficient magnitude to cause serious and hazardous conditions dangerous to the health and safety of Federal employees. Situations are confined to those involving Government agencies as a whole. Any problem not involving the entire group is a matter for local attention and resolution.

(When the need arises, a message will be immediately placed both on the “hotline” and the web site indicating that a decision is pending.) (Depending on whether the situation is weather or facility related, the appropriate Chair of Advisory Committee will be either the Director of the Chicago Oversight Division for the Office of Personnel Management or the Regional Administrator for the General Services Administration.) The **(appropriate)** chair will confer with the small, but representative, group of agency officials who form the Advisory Committee to consider appropriate action. If, in the judgment of the Chair, it is impossible or impractical to obtain such advice, he or she shall act alone. In his/her absence, the other chair will act in his/her stead.

(In most emergency situations, liberal leave will be the default policy. This change in policy should be helpful to FEB members, particularly when a final decision regarding dismissal has not yet been determined by the Advisory Committee.)

While the FEB notification is advisory only, agencies are strongly encouraged to give special weight to the advisory when making decisions. Deviations should be reserved for special conditions relating to such factors as geography or unique agency missions, so that our actions will be better understood by both the public and our own employees.

Each agency, acting on early dismissal information, should give consideration to the requirements for safeguarding Federal property and the needs of the Government to accomplish its work. The timing of the early dismissal should be arranged to avoid overtaxing public transportation facilities or causing traffic congestion.

The Regional Transportation Authority has indicated that neither the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) nor the commuter railroads (METRA) can adjust capacity to handle early dismissal. They also have said that, for the most part, hazardous weather conditions do not appreciably interfere with normal schedules. It is their firm belief that public transportation problems are seriously increased by early dismissal. Therefore, while an early closing may be a benefit to those who depend upon private transportation, that benefit must be weighed carefully when making a decision for early dismissal.

Agencies located in areas outside the main business section of Chicago may or may not be directly affected by the emergency situation. The agency heads in those locations should use their own discretion regarding the need for an early dismissal of employees.

SECTION II - PROCEDURES

Agency Responsibilities

Each agency head is urged to develop, and communicate to employees, internal policies and procedures to be followed in case of early dismissal. Personnel should be informed regarding leave policies and the designation of employees who perform emergency services.

At least annually, agencies should provide written procedures for emergency dismissal or closure to employees working in the Chicago area. The notice should tell employees how they will be notified and include the text of the media announcements to be used and a detailed explanation of their meaning. The notice also should explain that if an "unscheduled leave" policy is announced, employees must contact their agencies to request to use annual leave, leave without pay, and/or previously earned compensatory time off or credit hours. As a general policy, if an "early dismissal" is announced, personnel should not be charged annual leave for the excused period. For detailed guidance, please refer to Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subpart C.

At least annually, agencies should identify emergency personnel and notify them in writing that they are designated as "emergency employees." The term "emergency employee" is used to designate those employees who must report for work in emergency situations. The notice should include the requirement that "emergency employees" report for, or remain at work in emergency situations and an explanation that dismissal or closure announcements do not apply to them unless they are instructed otherwise. *Agencies must be careful to designate which employees are "emergency employees" for the purpose of adverse weather conditions and other emergency situations.* If an agency determines that a situation requires employees not designated as "emergency employees" to report for or remain at work during an emergency, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually.

Agencies are responsible for determining closure, dismissal, and leave policies for employees on shift work and alternative work schedules (i.e. flexible or compressed work schedules) and for informing employees of these policies.

Early Dismissal

Information to all Federal Government agencies in the Chicago area will be initiated by the Chair of the Advisory Committee upon the Advisory Committee's determination that the emergency situation warrants an early dismissal of Federal employees. If this is the case, the following will occur:

1. The Emergency Notification System will be activated
2. An advisory message will be placed on the FEB 24-hour hotline
3. An advisory message will be placed on the FEB Web site

In the event a situation appears serious enough to warrant consideration for early dismissal and a decision to stay open is made, then an advisory message to that effect will be issued through these channels of communication.

Off-hours Notification

If the emergency situation develops during off-duty hours, it may be necessary for all Federal employees, except those providing emergency services, to not report to work. Under such circumstances, the Chair of the Advisory Committee, or persons acting in his/her place, will initiate the following:

1. The Emergency Notification System will be activated
2. An advisory message will be placed on the FEB 24-hour hotline
3. An advisory message will be placed on the FEB Web site

Each agency head will be provided with the 24-hour telephone number, which can be called to obtain the announcement directly from the FEB. The message will give further details of the conditions upon which the decision was based. Agency, installation, and office heads will then disseminate the information to their employees through whatever internal agency procedures have already been established.

Since agencies located in areas outside of the main business section of Chicago may or may not be directly affected by the emergency situation, or may have different emergency or traffic conditions, they should develop internal instructions for how their employees should respond. Agencies also should provide internal instructions for those employees engaged in emergency services that cannot be suspended.

SECTION III - EMERGENCY TYPES

Hazardous Weather Conditions

The Meteorologist-in-Charge, National Weather Service Forecast Office, will notify the Director of the Chicago Oversight Division OPM when there is a 70 percent or greater probability of severe weather of sufficient magnitude to cause serious and hazardous conditions dangerous to the health and safety of Federal employees.

All Other Emergencies

Included are unforeseen events having adverse impact on operations or presenting a dangerous environment, including, but not limited to, **(power failures involving Government agencies as a whole)**, acts of terrorism, civil disobedience, riots, fire, transportation strikes, etc. The foregoing types of situations may vary in their intensity and the area affected. The Chair of the Advisory Committee should be notified by an appropriate official of any agency when, in that official's judgment, a situation involves Government agencies as a whole and is of sufficient magnitude to jeopardize the health and safety of Federal employees. Either the early dismissal plan or the off-hours notification plan described in Section II will be invoked as appropriate.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(As of December 6, 2001)

CHAIRS

Weather-related Issues:

Phyllis M. Stabbe
Director, Chicago Oversight Division
OPM
312-353-0387

Facilities-related Issues:

James Handley
Regional Administrator, GSA
(or Ken Kalscheur, Deputy Regional Director,
GSA)
312-353-5395

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

William Thompson
Area Director, Compliance
Small Business/Self-Employed Division
IRS
312-566-4300

Thomas Skinner
Regional Administrator, EPA
312-886-3000

Thomas Kneir
Special Agent-in-Charge
Federal Bureau of Investigation
312-786-2600 (day)
312-431-1333 (24 hours)

Darlene A. Lorman
Regional Administrator
OASAM, DoL
312-353-8373

FEB Chair (2002 – Phyllis Stabbe)

James Whigham
United States Marshal
United States Marshals Service
312-353-5043

Jan Stinson
Executive Director, FEB
312-353-6790